

The University of Chicago

**THE MOTIVATING FACTORS ENTER-
ING INTO THE CHOICE OF
THE MINISTRY**

A CASE STUDY OF MINISTERIAL STUDENTS

**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE
GRADUATE FACULTY IN CANDIDACY FOR
THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

DEPARTMENT OF CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY AND ETHICS

1930

By

ABBOTT PHILIP HERMAN

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CHAPTER I

PROBLEM AND METHOD

This study was undertaken for the purpose of uncovering the causal chain which lies back of men's decisions to enter the ministry. The assumption from the beginning was that momentous decisions and choices in the life of an individual are made on the basis of conditioning factors which have given him certain attitudes and interests and have helped to make him what he is. These factors, it was assumed, could be obtained best through the case studies of individuals now enrolled in theological seminaries.

The following statement is a definition of the problem pursued in this study:

1. To secure case studies of ministerial students,
2. To analyze these cases for the factors responsible for the development of favorable attitudes toward religion and the church,
3. To discover the motivating factors leading men into the ministry through an analysis of the reasons given and of the experiences through which these students have gone.

An elaboration of some of the terms used in the definition of the problem is necessary in order that the meanings attributed to them throughout the study may be made clear

at the outset.

The term "religious" or "religion" connotes those attitudes, concepts, standards, and beliefs which are accepted as religious by the groups of which a person is a part. The intention is to avoid setting up any criteria, theological or otherwise, by which the faith of these men can be measured. The primary concern of this investigation is to find the process by which those attitudes, which the group and the individual himself consider to be religious, come into being.

Park and Burgess'¹ definition of attitudes as "mobilizations and organizations of the wishes with reference to definite situations" is accepted in this study as the basis for the analysis of the cases. It suggests that for an understanding of the attitude there must be considered both the object or situation and the organization of the drives, the particular motives, which respond to the object or situation and make the attitude possible.

The investigation has been limited to "favorable" attitudes toward religion and the church because to include unfavorable attitudes would be to introduce extraneous factors. Unfavorable attitudes can be found in the cases and it would be interesting to observe the process by which these were

¹Park, R. E. and Burgess, E. W. Introduction to the Science of Sociology, University of Chicago Press, 1924, p. 438. The wishes referred to are the four: (1) for response, (2) for recognition, (3) for security, and (4) for new experience, mentioned in Thomas, W. I., The Unadjusted Girl.

counteracted by the favorable. But, the assumption is that only favorable attitudes toward religion and the church would be conducive to a decision for the ministry and therefore any consideration of the unfavorable would be to confuse the issue.

The question might be raised whether the motivating factors entering into the choice of the ministry (called for in part 3 of the problem) could not have been determined without an analysis first to discover the individual's attitudes toward religion and the church. The answer is implied in the statement at the beginning of this chapter: "momentous decisions and choices in the life of an individual are made on the basis of conditioning factors which have given him certain attitudes and interests and have helped to make him what he is". Thomas gives a more scientific explanation of the same phenomenon:

If we wish to explain the appearance of a new attitude--whether in one individual or in a whole group--we know that this attitude appeared as a consequence of the influence of a social value upon the individual or group, but we know also that this influence would have been impossible unless there had been some pre-existing attitude, some wish, emotional habit, or intellectual tendency, to which this value has in some way appealed, favoring it, contradicting it, giving it a new direction, or stabilizing its hesitating expressions. Our problem is therefore to find both the value and the pre-existing attitudes upon which it has acted and get in their combination the necessary and sufficient cause for the new attitude. ¹

¹Thomas, W. I. and Znaniecki, F. The Polish Peasant in Europe and America, University of Chicago Press, 1918, Vol. I, pp. 44, 45 (underscoring mine). It is assumed that the acceptance of the ministry as a vocation is to take a new attitude toward it.

With reference to part (1) of the problem, fifty case studies were secured through interviews with ministerial students. The guide questions for this interview are given in Appendix A, but it is in point to say here that the clues sought after were the influences of the home, church, community, and college upon the individual and his reactions to them. Crises and emotional experiences and the conditions surrounding them were especially noted, for reasons given later in the study.

The five theological seminaries in Chicago, in which the subjects were studying, represent almost every shade of theological viewpoint, ranging from extremely liberal to ultra-conservative. Wherever possible arrangements were made to interview those men who were considered by faculty and students to be most representative of the student body. This still permitted a wide range of types of experience and personality from which to choose.

In all but one of the seminaries the writer was acquainted with at least two or three students or faculty to whom he could make his first approach regarding the investigation. It is significant that most students when approached were quite willing, some even enthusiastic, to share in the study because they felt it would reveal to them unrecognized factors which had led them into a "religious" profession.

All but a few of the interviews took place in the room of the student. Privilege was asked to record the

statements of the subject and in every case such permission was readily granted. As a preliminary to the main interview the purpose of the study was briefly explained as being an attempt to uncover the causal chain which lies back of a man's decision to enter the ministry. It was pointed out that experiences, apparently irrelevant, might bear very directly on the motives for choosing the ministry. Thus the student at the outset was encouraged to take the genetic view of the problem and see his decision in the perspective of a life-span.

Little difficulty was incurred in securing the proper rapport with the subject. In cases where the student was naturally more reserved or a bit on his guard lest the too personal experiences of his life be probed into, that feeling of distance very rapidly disappeared as he began talking upon various phases of his experience. This may have been aided somewhat by the first question which dealt with the reasons for deciding on the ministry. It seemed to be a very natural starting point and one on which most students talked freely and unreservedly. From this point with the remark, "Now, let us get in back of these reasons", the transition was made to the early experiences in the home. Effort was made to guide the thinking of the subject without having the interviewer's questions appear too prominent. Spontaneity of expression on the part of the student was strongly encouraged. This, incidentally, led to a good many

statements which proved to be irrelevant to the particular aim of the study.

Possibly a more satisfactory and comprehensive approach would have been not only to interview the student but also to secure from him a life-history document after the interview. But ministerial students could hardly have been persuaded to spend the ten or more hours necessary, in addition to the time already given, to write such documents. However, by visiting each seminary over a period of weeks it was possible to pick up here and there from others quite a little information concerning those who either had been or were to be visited.

The question which arises at this point concerns the validity of this method of getting at attitudes. Can the attitudes of these students be derived from their verbal statements? In other words, we are confronted here with the distinction between an attitude and an opinion. Professor Faris maintains that an opinion is a verbal act, not the attitude, although it may express the attitude. The difficulty in the way of an opinion expressing an attitude, he points out, is that opinion implies the presence of another person and not merely the object of the attitude, which means that in most cases the opinion will be worded so as to receive the other person's approval. It therefore may not be truly representative of the attitude.¹

¹Taken from Professor Faris' class lectures on Social Attitudes.

This justifiable criticism of accepting verbal statements or opinions as indicative of an attitude, is recognized in the study and met in the following ways:

(1) The verbal statements secured from the student cover his entire life and therefore any one statement can be seen in the light of all. Professor Faris himself points to this check as one of the means of establishing the validity of attitudes derived from opinions. Unless the subject has consistently colored the accounts of all his experiences, inconsistencies may be observed between the motives for the behavior anticipated from previous trends and the statement by the student concerning the reasons for this same behavior.

(2) There are certain advantages to the interview--advantages which incidentally answer some of the objections to it as a method. First of all the interviewer is able to note the emotional strain which creeps into the tone when a sensitive point is reached. Accompanying this there may be a nervous mannerism which comes into play only at such a point. Or it may be that a statement is so worded as to be very apparently an evasion of the question.

As a result of these signs or signals the investigator was moved in a number of cases to insert a more direct question or one in another form to tap the emotionally colored material which is so much a part of the attitude. Many times this effort was rewarded with an account of some crisis

or conflict which shed a good deal of light on the individual's activities. There were instances, however, when it seemed wise not to follow through on a particular point lest the remainder of the interview be affected.

If the real attitudes of men can be opened to view, as Professor Holt believes they can "whenever men act in a crisis, whenever they cooperate in a venture, whenever their confidence is secured",¹ then there is reason for believing that real attitudes have been uncovered in this study. Most of the men were very frank in their statements and some hastened to add after an account of an experience that it was the first time they had related it to any one. One of the reasons for this frankness may have been that there was an honest attempt on their part to understand themselves in order that they might in turn be better qualified in their ministry to understand others.

One further word of explanation. The theory underlying this study is that religious attitudes are developed as are any other attitudes out of the matrix and culture of groups. If there are those who would look for some mystic or supernatural process by which religious attitudes are infused into the individual from an order, other than the natural, then the findings of this study will seem unduly limited

¹Holt, A. E. "Case Records as Data for Studying the Conditioning of Religious Experience by Social Factors", The American Journal of Sociology, Vol. 32, pp. 227-236.

in their scope. The writer, religiously, is a theist and assumes that religious phenomena like any other take place within the natural cosmic order. Of course one cannot be dogmatic on this point as there is still much about the individual and his world that baffles the human understanding. But if any study is to be scientific, it must confine itself to natural, social processes.

CHAPTER II

FACTORS GIVING RISE TO FAVORABLE ATTITUDES TOWARD RELIGION AND THE CHURCH

These factors obviously arise in the interactions which the individual has with those groups of which he is a part. For this reason the factors will be considered under four groupings: home, church, college, and personal. The fourth classification requires some explanation.

The word "personal" is not used here to denote something which arises within the experience of the individual himself without reference to the group. There are factors, however, which are primarily applicable to the person and which uniquely characterize him. These cannot very readily be classified under any group category, although they derive their meaning from group experiences.

It should be noted also that the factors listed under the various groupings are not necessarily all involved in a case analysis. Those which are common to every case will be so indicated.

A Factors Arising in the Home

1. The church has status in the home.

In grading the degree of religious expression in the home the writer was guided by the following elements: the father's profession of religion, his church activity;

the mother's profession of religion, her church activity; the religious profession and church activity of adult relatives residing in the home; the church activity of the children; whether family worship, grace at meals, prayers at night and reading of the Bible or religious stories were practices. On the basis of these findings, the following percentages can be considered a rough arithmetical estimate of the regard in which religion was held in the home.

26% came from homes of intense degree of religious expression

22% " " " " very strong " " " "

24% " " " " strong " " " "

10% " " " "fairly strong " " " "

10% " " " " moderate " " " "

8% " " " " mild " " " "

As can be seen in the foregoing percentages the church was held in some regard by every home represented. In all but one case of the 8 per cent labeled as "mild" the mother's religious devotion helped to maintain the status of the church in the home, sometimes in the face of the father's antagonistic attitude.

It does not follow that the higher the degree of religious expression the more active is the child's participation in the church. All that can be said here is that when the church has status in the home it is easier for the child to become a participant in its life.

2. Religious forms (ritual) are observed in the home.

Grace at meals	in 70%	of the cases.
Family worship	in 38%	" " "
Prayers at night	in 100%	" " "
Reading of Bible or missionary stories	in 48%	" " "

The transfer to the children of the attitudes of the parents toward these religious exercises may be explained on the basis of the tendency in persons to take the role of other persons. Professor Faris writes:

'Unwitting imitation' [Interpreted by Faris as the slow acquisition of the attitudes of others] comes from the normal human tendency to converse with one's self, that is, to stimulate one's self and to answer one's own stimulation, in which process one takes the role of the other, and new attitudes from the other enter the repertory of the person. ¹

3. Identification of the child with a parent or other relative who is intensely religious.

Identification may be taken here to mean the child's assumption of the role of another to such a degree that that person's dominating interests and attitudes are taken over by the child.

a. Identification as a result of admiration, love and respect for another.

The process, as has already been intimated, is that in imaginatively entering into the other, the attitudes and aspirations of the other are unconsciously taken over.

¹Faris, E., "The Concept of Imitation", The American Journal of Sociology, 1926-27, Vol. 32, p. 373.

b. Identification with the religious parent, aided by conflict between the religious and the non- or irreligious parent.

The writer does not wish to convey the impression that religion is the issue in the conflict and that the boy sides with the religious parent, usually the mother, because she is religious. Although religion may be an integral part of the conflict, the issue is a more comprehensive one. What can be said is that the boy's sympathy for the mother is roused by the suffering inflicted upon her by the father and a closer identification with her takes place on that account. Where the parent with whom identification is aided by conflict happens to be intensely religious, the transfer of her religious patterns to the boy naturally follows.

The other thing that happens is that in those cases in which the conflict involves the religious element, it may bring into the clear the religious as over against the non-religious or irreligious. This conflict, particularly if the boy bears no resentment toward the father because of ill-treatment, is bound to create tension in his mind as he seeks in his childish way to evaluate the beliefs and conduct of both parents. It is almost a commonplace to say that conflict, if not too severe, is a prerequisite of problem-solving and reflection. This undue stress on religious patterns and attitudes causes them to loom larger in the child's mind and by so doing makes them more meaningful.

4. The religious patterns of behavior employed by the parents at some crucial time either in the life of the family or of the child are fixed and made vivid in the mind of the child.

It is the experience of every one that he remembers most vividly particular occurrences in his past which are associated with some crisis either in his own life or in the group with which he is very intimate. Particularly are they remembered if they offer some release to an emotional tension. What actually takes place is that the occurrence, which ordinarily would have no unusual significance, is embodied or organized into the thinking of the person under emotional stress and becomes meaningful.

B Factors Arising in the Church

1. Church people have a definite conception of the role of the child of a church family.

The child's status in the church which means his position in that group, is determined for him by the very fact that his parents are leaders in it. His position is even more clearly defined if he happens to be born into a family which has a "religious history" so that church people can make constant references to his grandfather, uncles, and aunts, all of whom were notoriously religious. Obviously this conception of the child's position in the church varies with the size of the community--it is present as a united front to him in the small town where everybody knows the family and where social controls operate very

effectively. This may partly account for the fact that ministerial students come in greater numbers from the smaller communities.

Since the individual's conception of his own role is based on the conceptions which others have of it, it is very natural for him to fit into the position the church group has mentally made for him. This may be more difficult for the child to do if he finds himself a member of other groups, a gang or play group, for example, in which his status demands behavior contrary to that required of him in the church.

2. Pleasant church experiences.

a. The church may provide a satisfying outlet for social expression not enjoyed elsewhere.

b. Church associations may give desired social status not received elsewhere.

The difference between a and b lies in the amount of conflict involved. In a it is assumed that there are no particular barriers set up by other groups to the individual's participation in their life--the choice rests with the individual. In b there is conflict between the boy and other groups with the result that his church associations through which he received desired status stand out as being happy in his memory. The point the writer is attempting to make here is not that the church, because it is the church, is more sympathetic in its treatment of

sensitive boys (although this inference is not necessarily ruled out) but that, however it may happen, the individual without status in other groups finds standing within a church group.

3. Acceptance of church membership at an early age.

Fifty-eight per cent of the 50 ministerial students interviewed became members of the church at 12 years of age or under, 36 per cent between the ages of 13 and 17, most of them in the early part of this period. The average age of joining the church was 12.7 years.

It is safe to assume that at this period a child's relation to a group has not been rationalized. He accepts the church without much question--the intellectualization of religious concepts are not his concern.

Without intellectual inhibitions, therefore, the ritual and preparation associated with becoming a church member have full play to make a deep impression on the boy's life. Many of the cases do not have any vivid recollection of that step but others recall being deeply moved by it. The reason for the experience of the latter group is easily to be seen. There is the preparation period when parents, Sunday School teacher or minister impress upon the child the value of his becoming a regular church member and assuming the responsibilities incident to church membership. His sense of loyalty is appealed to. If there is such a thing

as a tendency in children to be part of and loyal to a collective enterprise, as Faris and others point out, then this tendency is afforded ample opportunity for satisfaction in the child's public acceptance of church membership.¹

There may be weeks of instruction preparing him for this step and leading up to some form of admission service in which the ritual (particularly in a confirmation service) is so planned as to challenge the child's highest loyalties. This emotional coloring contributes to the intensification of already existing attitudes toward religion and the church and even to the inculcation of new conceptions.

4. Church revival meetings and young people's conventions.

Less than 20 per cent of the cases have had the experience of making a public stand in a revival service.

There are several elements involved in revival meetings which are intended to rouse the audience to a pitch of emotional tension sufficient to move the "will". Inhibitions, which the individual may have, give way to fixation upon the idea of making a public stand which the evangelist wishes to convey to his audience.

¹"Children, like their elders, want to belong to a company which is larger than themselves and sink their individuality in the common devotion to a collective enterprise. The first and greatest tendency, then, may be given as loyalty." Faris, E., "On the Fundamental Tendencies of Children", Religious Education, Nov., 1929.

It may be, and often is the case, that together with these factors the adolescent is conscious of some tension within his own life. The individual deeply sensitive about such a conflict may find in the message of the revival service some solution to his problem, a reinforcement in his struggle.

The impression should not be left that in every case of a public stand during a revival service the boy is necessarily conscious of inner tensions which are causing his unhappiness. If he is in a home and church where revival services and conversion are looked upon as essential and desirable elements in religious experience, he may anticipate such an experience as the crowning feature of his religious development.

In Young People's conventions, in addition to the factors already mentioned, we may find still others. Speakers with impressive and magnetic personalities may grip the young people with the challenge to identify their life with some cause. They are led to imagine themselves in the role of champions of righteousness or of a gospel which all people should hear.

Another factor is that when the appeal is made by the leader, and boys and perhaps girls begin rising here and there in response to the challenge, there is a strong urge within the individual to stand and associate himself with those who are for the moment receiving the recognition of the

conference. Again his desire to become a member of a collective enterprise with status is stirred--he does not wish to be one of those who remain isolated from the recognized group.

One point, which should be noted, is that the cause or origin of an experience does not necessarily affect the validity of its outcome. However the experience may have come about, it served to change attitudes and introduce meanings which had a marked effect upon the life.

5. Influence of one or more persons associated with the church or other religious institution (Y.M.C.A.).

This factor is a frequent one in the cases studied. Boys are helped to visualize religion and the church in terms of those persons who command their respect, affection, and confidence.

This relationship is especially augmented when the boy in time of conflict finds his counselor in a religious institution. All the joy and emotional satisfaction associated with the release from his conflict may be transferred to the central fact of the counselor's life--his religious faith and vocation.

Q

Factors Arising at College

1. Intellectual difficulty caused by conflict between academic culture and home religious or church culture.

Among those in the fifty cases who have had intellectual conflicts at college there are a few whose faith has

been so weakened that only the momentum of their early decision to enter the ministry has carried them on to seminary. Two of these students are seriously questioning whether their present conceptions of religion do not make it advisable that they seek some other field of work.

Intellectual difficulties, on the other hand, may make more meaningful already existing attitudes toward religion and the church. Conflict, we have already seen, tends to sharpen the issue and bring the opposing elements into relief so that the student, even the one who has already decided for the ministry, sees religion in new relationships and with new meanings. He may realize for the first time how much his life is organized about it and therefore how indispensable it is to him.

These conflicts have apparently not arisen in the majority of the cases. Into those cases where they have occurred other causes may enter, such as health and sex tensions, to make more severe the disturbance. But we cannot overlook the intellectual difficulty which is an integral part of the conflict, whatever else may be involved.

2. Participation in college religious activities.

a. The student who has been accustomed to church work before coming to college naturally looks first to religious organizations in which to enlist his time and effort. Students very frequently become so immersed in these activities that they become identified with the religious interests

and outlooks which these organizations represent.

b. Sometimes the activity is of an intensely personal and devotional religious sort and by its very nature is bound to induce religious attitudes the participant. This is vividly portrayed in the few cases in which students met with early morning prayer groups.

c. There are at least two cases in which there was a closer identification with the church and religious activities due to the fact that the students were in conflict with other social groups at college. The status and recognition denied them in these groups were found in the fellowship of church and other religious organizations.

3. Influence of religious faculty men and campus religious workers.

The elements involved in the relationship between an individual and his counselor have already been discussed. Some of the cases reveal the tremendous influence a religious counselor may wield in the life of a student, particularly at the time of a conflict.

4. The influence of a college chum who is religious.

5. Religious conferences and movements.

There may be a number of elements involved in a student's response to religious conferences and movements. There is the atmosphere of expectation and interest necessary to rouse the emotions to a high pitch. In the case of

one movement in particular, students in small groups are called upon to share with each other their temptations and besetting sins, with the result that an intense interest is awakened in the proceedings; especially is this true of students who are, because of the high standards they cherish, keenly sensitive to impulses and conduct which fall below this level. There may be personal conferences with a leader who is peculiarly adept at probing beneath the exterior and enabling the student to face himself. There is usually a strong appeal to the student to give himself to Christ and even to carry on a personal program of winning others to Christ. In certain conferences the emphasis may be partly on social causes which demand sacrifice, devotion, and courage. The student may actually imagine himself in the role of a leader of reform. A number of these elements may contribute to the student's intense reaction to the appeal of the religious conference.

D Personal Factors

1. Health tension.

This tension refers not so much to the physical condition of the individual as it does to the social implications of his physical condition which may be ever more significant to his development. The crippled child, for example, or even

the frail child, soon discovers that he is different from others. He is not able to participate in the play of the group with which he would normally associate. He conceives his role to be that of an onlooker to be tolerated and pitied. Boys and even adults may unwittingly and impulsively direct certain remarks to him revealing their attitudes toward him.

All this may cause him to withdraw from groups and live in isolation. His tendency will be to seek to find his satisfactions in a world of fancy away from this world of stern reality which is so socially painful to him. If he has had religious training or read religious literature these imaginative excursions may be couched in religious concepts and patterns. He may find strength in these outreachings to the universe to withstand the hardships of his real life.

2. Moral tension.

A working definition of "conscience" may be given as the social judgment which an individual pronounces upon himself. That is to say, the individual accepts certain standards of his culture as the norms to which he aspires and by which he measures his acts.

Conscience connotes an act of judging, i.e., these standards of the group reflected in the individual sit as a monitor over acts or inclinations which are at variance with

them. The religious young man, for example, who has been taught to look upon sex transgressions as unholy and sinful, sits in stern judgment upon his impulses and behavior which belong in this category. The more keenly aware he is of the clash between this "sinful" thing and his conscience the more sensitive he grows about it and the greater the tension it produces in his life.

This may produce a sense of isolation. That is, there is something within the person which he cannot easily share with his group. He is driven back within himself. The resultant feeling of isolation tends to exaggerate in his mind the thing which causes it, thereby making him still more sensitive.

Moral tensions may be conducive to the development of attitudes toward religion and the church in a number of ways. Religion itself is a factor in the tension--it may be practically identified in the religious person's mind with his conscience. He may even personify his conscience and conceive it as God-given. He may, therefore, pray fervently for strength to withstand the temptation or habit which has fastened itself upon his life. Religion is called upon as an ally in the moral struggle.

Another theory to explain the development of religious attitudes as a result of moral tension is that the person who feels out of harmony with his fellows may seek to

become reconciled with God, hoping thereby to become reconciled with his fellows. That is, God may symbolize to him the society of men with whom he seeks right relations.¹

The inner organization which is achieved in the cases under consideration is usually aided by some wise and sympathetic counselor (who is religious) whom the individual has sought out or discovered in a religious conference or revival meeting. The fact that the counselor is religious and in addition may suggest a religious solution aids greatly in the organization of the person's life about religion.

3. Conflict caused by a personality pattern.

A personality pattern may be defined as the behavior reactions and trends which become fixed early in an individual's life as a result of his interaction with others. This pattern may be said to be fundamental in the person's conduct throughout the remainder of his life, although it may be considerably qualified by later experience.

The personality pattern under consideration may be characterized in an individual by the following traits: self-assertive, highly ambitious and aggressive, proud, sensitive, loathe to take blame, argumentative, and reluctant to give ground, sometimes lacking in a sense of humor

¹ See Boisen, A. T., "The Sense of Isolation in Mental Disorders", The American Journal of Sociology, Vol. XXXIII, Jan., 1928, p. 563.

especially where he himself is concerned or, to put it another way, inclined to take himself too seriously. If he were to be characterized on the basis of Thomas' wishes it might be said that his dominant wish is for recognition. A person manifesting this pattern is sometimes labeled egocentric.

Such a person inevitably comes in conflict with his group. He may be thwarted in his ambitions and disappointed in his aspirations. He will feel keenly his lack of prestige and status. If he is socially inclined, the fact that he cannot win and hold friendship may weigh heavily upon him.

He turns to religion because he has been trained to expect definite help from it in time of stress. He reaches out for a saving and comforting hand. He may find through religion a way of transferring his ambitions to challenging social causes.

Another service which religion may render him is to help him achieve a sense of spiritual independence. He is thereby enabled to become somewhat emancipated from his craving for the plaudits and praise of the group. His dependence upon men is transformed to a dependence upon a religious ideal.

CHAPTER III

THE PLUS FACTORS ENTERING INTO THE CHOICE OF THE MINISTRY

Thus far in our analysis of the data we have been considering those factors which are conducive to the development of favorable attitudes toward religion and the church. It has already been pointed out that the justification for this procedure rests on two assumptions: (1) the vocation of the ministry cannot be conceived without relation to its two components, religion and the church, as the teaching of mathematics, for example, is vitally related to both the subject mathematics and the educational institution in which this subject is taught; (2) any decision with reference to the ministry necessarily, in the very nature of the case, presupposes already existing attitudes toward religion and the church upon which the choice is made.

Favorable attitudes toward religion and the church, however, are not enough to cause an individual to enter the ministry. It is conceivable that many of the laity and active membership of the church have undergone experiences similar to those listed in the preceding four chapters without ever having faced the question of deciding for the ministry. There seems to be a plus factor (or factors) which enters into the scheme and furnishes the added

motivation necessary for the individual's choice. This chapter concerns itself with the plus factors of motivation.

1. Early identification with the role of the minister.

This factor applies particularly to the seven students whose characteristic reply to the first question was "I have always thought of the ministry".

Obviously, however, in spite of the difficulty of uncovering the elements in the early experience, there was a first time when the boy definitely conceived himself in the role of a minister. In most cases we have definite clues to the process.

Three out of the seven making very early decisions are sons of ministers. We might be led to infer that given the right conditions, all the elements of which we are unable to discover, it would be comparatively easy for the child in a ministerial home to identify himself with his father's vocation. It is reasonable to suppose that it is natural for children to imagine themselves carrying on the vocation of the father, particularly if encouragement and not discouragement be added to the inclination.

In other cases conditions are such as to arouse the child's imagination about the minister and make his office appear to be a most desirable goal.

The important part of this early choice, however, lies not so much with the early identification as it does with subsequent events with reference to this choice. The

early decision will make for a certain amount of life-organization about religion and the church, providing the subsequent conditions are of such a nature as to give it reinforcement.

Another factor that enters into the process to maintain the early identification is the conception which others have of the role of the boy looking forward to the ministry.

2. Commitment to the ministry in response to recruiting efforts.

A commitment to full time Christian service made either publicly or before another person seems to be of enough consequence in the ministerial student's thinking as to receive some mention in his account of the processes leading him to the seminary. In most of the cases citing such an experience, this commitment is considered to be the initial step in the direction of the ministry. This first stand may remain most vivid in his mind and be the primary momentum in his high school and college years. Or it may, due to the absence of encouragement and the introduction of other factors, be relegated to the background of his consciousness and be forgotten for a period. The important thing to be remembered in this factor, however, is that it furnishes a nucleus of thought, an idea, around which, if not immediately then later, vocational aspirations begin to cluster. If other vocational goals are introduced to his mind, this original conviction offers them combat.

a. The pledge in special meetings or Young People's conferences.

The element of inner conflict may be lacking in these cases. The public commitment seems to be a culmination of highly concentrated activity in the church and its organizations. In fact, most of these boys are appointed as delegates to these conferences because of the leadership they have already manifested in church activities. It is important, therefore, to realize that these boys come to such conferences already highly "conditioned" religiously.

b. Promise to a minister or Y.M.C.A. secretary.

The minister or Y. secretary may be in a position as counselor to an individual in time of conflict, to make a direct appeal for the ministry.

3. Implantation of the idea of the ministry by parents and friends.

This factor differs from the one discussed in the preceding section in that no commitment is made by the boy in response to the encouragement of parents and friends. An impression is merely planted in the young mind and later bears fruit.

4. A reorganization of life about religion culminating in a decision for the ministry.

Three theories are here advanced to explain the process involved in the step leading from the individual's dedication of himself to the Christian life through an intense religious experience and his acceptance of the

ministry as a life-work, following almost immediately, in some cases, upon the heels of the experience. The first is the conception of "the call", which is even today part of the Christian culture; the second is the role which the decision for the ministry plays in the process of reorganization of the life; the third is the influence exerted by a professional religious worker following the experience. The process may involve any or all of these phenomena, depending of course on the religious tradition and social situation in which the person finds himself.

a. The pattern of "the call" can be found in Paul's experience on the road to Damascus or in Augustine's experience in the garden of Milan. The important thing to remember in both of these cases is that a new unification or organization of the divided self about the Christian faith was interpreted as a special appointment by God to bring His saving influence to others. This identification of the call with the conversion experience has since become a cultural pattern according to which men have been led to enter the ministry.

b. The role of the decision for the ministry in the process of reorganization.

The person who experiences the resolution of an inner tension tastes, perhaps for the first time, the exhilaration of the unified life. Pratt defines life organization as "a unified being with a definite direction

under the guidance of a group of consistent and harmonious purposes or ideals".¹

If organized about religion, the person experiences the joy of being once more in harmony with God's will and purpose for his life. Instinctively he tends to cling to that which has brought him inner peace and power. As he devotes himself more and more to the church it becomes the center of his interests. The more time he spends in it the more firm does its hold upon his life become.

He may, as a result, turn away from his former associations and activities. Even his work, particularly if he is not adjusted in it, may be associated with the unhappy experiences of the "conflict" days. Or it may be that his daily occupation does not allow him to consecrate all his energies to that which has meant so much to his happiness. Both of these elements probably are influential in causing him to turn to the ministry as a further step in completing his happiness, or reorganization.

c. The influence exerted by a professional religious worker following the experience.

If a minister or Y.M.C.A. secretary has been influential in bringing about the resolution of the conflict he is in a very strategic position to recruit for the

¹
Pratt, J. B. The Religious Consciousness, Macmillan Co., 1924, p. 123.

ministry. The new convert is in a state of mind most amenable to suggestion from one who has helped to restore him his happiness.

Perhaps one of the chief factors at work in this activity of professional religious workers recruiting men for the ministry is the conviction, which has been bred into them by the Christian culture, that one of their sacred tasks is to cultivate promising young men for the ministry.

5. Conception of the church and the ministry in the Christian tradition.

John R. Mott expresses a dominant conviction in the Christian culture of a past generation and even of our own:

The church is a divine institution, founded by Christ and the Apostles. It has done more to purify, enrich and strengthen mankind than have all other movements. It is still the most powerful and beneficent agency for promoting the cause of morality and religion. It has ever been and yet is not only an ameliorating force that makes life tolerable, but an inspiring force that makes life progressive. Take the Christian church out of society and it collapses. The church furnishes the springs of life and power for all other beneficent institutions and movements. It is the root; they are the branches. Its work is the most enduring; it deals with the indestructible part of man. 1

As one contemplates even the regular functions of this calling one must be convinced that in vital importance there is no work comparable to the Christian ministry. 2

¹Mott, J. R., The Future Leadership of the Church, Y.M.C.A., N.Y., 1908, pp. 3, 4.

²Ibid., p. 17.

This conception of the ministry and the church is reflected in the thinking and attitudes of students steeped in the Christian tradition. Statements made by students in interviews are an evidence of this influence: "The church is the greatest institution for the promotion of the welfare of men", "The ministry is the highest vocation a man can enter", "The ministry has prestige and a highly honorable position".

Looking at it from the standpoint of the individual, one may say that he achieves a sense of enlarged status as he imagines himself identified with an institution and a vocation acknowledged to be the greatest of all.

6. The appeal and challenge of the opportunities for service which the ministry offers.

Every individual who has acquired attitudes toward religion and the church cannot fail to have been impressed with the undue emphasis on the service motive. "Happiness is achieved only through service of others", "He who would lose his life for my sake, shall save it," are borne in upon his mind through constant reiteration in every activity in the church. The ultra-conservative and the extreme liberal groups are in accord on this general emphasis. To be sure, the very conservative will interpret the highest good in this service to be "the saving of souls" and the liberal may construe it as the organization "of forces for good in the community". But in both cases the common ground is

unselfish devotion to a cause.

This factor, like others, of course, is made up of a complex of motives; it is partly the desire of the individual to lose himself in higher ends; it is in part a religious conviction--a devotion to Christ and a desire to follow Him--inculcated by one's Christian training; it is partly a desire to help those who, one has been led to feel, need help--this is especially strong when one is conscious of having been aided in his own struggles by religious ministrations; and in part it is the desire to find recognition and approval by devoting oneself to a cause which has status.

7. Appeal of the public-speaking opportunities of the ministry.

The writer can safely say that in no case where a man has felt a peculiar gift for public speaking has this been the only factor impelling him to enter the ministry.

One of the first elements common to these students is that they have strongly religious backgrounds and a record of active participation in the church. In fact it can be said of most of them that they first discovered and gave expression to this speaking ability in connection with some activity in a religious organization, usually the church. Another factor common to all of them is that they have something to preach, something which they feel others should hear. It may be a strong devotion to the figure of

Christ and the conviction that it is the minister's task to preach him; it may be the desire to inspire people or to set forth the social gospel that people may become enlightened on the implications of Christianity in the social order.

All this is given by way of qualifying the following statement: that the opportunities for public speaking which the ministry offers are strongly attractive to the individual who has discovered he has peculiar aptitudes for this particular task. If there is a desire for recognition in all of us, the young man with speaking talents and with religious convictions naturally feels himself drawn to that vocation which offers him his greatest satisfactions along this line.

8. The most satisfying experiences and achievements are associated with the church and other religious activities.

It is evident from the statements of six students and from a critical examination of their lives that this factor is of considerable importance in directing them to the ministry. It may be that the desire for security as well as the desire for recognition explains the motivation from the standpoint of the individual. Whatever it is, it seems that when one is confronted with the task of making a vocational decision and in retrospection looks back over a life whose greatest satisfactions have come in church participation (and perhaps at college in the Y.M.C.A. also),

he may realize that to maintain this very satisfying relationship only one further step is necessary.

Presumably, at least two questions occur to the individual who is facing a vocational decision: (1) will he be happy in the vocation? and (2) can he succeed in it? When success has already attended all of his efforts in the church (and Y.M.C.A. at college) and special recognition has come to him as a result of his religious activities, both of these questions are answered in the decided affirmative.

This is especially true if the individual has experienced relationships with other groups in which he has felt isolated and unsatisfied. The contrast may make the ministry stand out as being even more desirable.

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APPENDIX A

TYPE OF INTERVIEW

It cannot be insisted upon with too much emphasis that the questions listed below do not contain all the queries directed to the student. Each interview demanded its own particular questions. The list presented, therefore, is a mere outline or guide which served as an instrument in uncovering the general data desired.

Type of Questions Asked In Outline Form

INTRODUCTION

Will you give me in brief fashion your reasons for entering the ministry--reasons such as you would give to a group of ministers of your denomination examining you as a candidate for the ministry?
(What do you hope to do in the ministry?).

HOME

Will you give me a little about the background and education of your father?
What is his occupation?
How would you characterize your father's religious faith?
How active was he in church work?

Will you give me a little about the background and education of your mother?
How would you characterize her religious faith?
How active was she in church work?

How many children in your family?
What are their respective ages?

Would you say the relations between your mother and father were harmonious? i.e., was your home a happy one?

How did you get along with your father?
How did you get along with your mother?
Did you play with your brothers and sisters? Were they your companions? (Usually got information about relations that

existed between them).

Did you have grace at meals and family worship? When? By whom led?

Who taught you your prayers, if any? What were they like?

What kind of reading did you do as a child?

What were your earliest conceptions of God and prayer?

Did you ever have cause to feel that your home was inferior economically or culturally to other homes?

How did you take that--did it make you unhappy?

CHURCH

How active were you (and your brothers and sisters) in the church? What offices did you hold?

Were your children compelled to go to church?

Was there any one, a preacher, or Sunday School teacher, or any one else who, you think, influenced you in any way?

How would you characterize the theological position of the church?

What kind of preachers did the church have?

How old were you when you joined the church?

What were the circumstances of your joining?

COMMUNITY

In what town were you born?

What is its populations?

What kind of a neighborhood did you live in as a small boy?

Were there mixed nationalities, and religious sects, or was the community fairly homogeneous?

Did you associate with any gangs?

What kind of boys and girls were your close companions?

Were they in the church?

Did you live in the same town all your life?

What were your vocational experiences as a boy?

SCHOOL

How did you get along in grade school?

How did you get along in high school?

Did you participate in extra-curricular activities?

SEX

What kind of sex education did your parents give you?

Did you feel free to go to your father with any confidences along this line?

*Did you pray in a crisis?

Did you have any girl friends?

VOCATION

When did the idea of entering the ministry occur to you?

What were the circumstances?

How did your parents react to it? your friends?

What vocation did you decide on?

COLLEGE

When and how did you decide to go to college?

How did you get along at college--grades?

What extra-curricular activities did you participate in?

What church activities did you engage in?

Did any one exert any unusual influence over you?

Did any of the courses disturb you?

Have you continued the practice of private prayer?

When and under what circumstances did you have your first public speaking experience?

How did you enjoy it?

How did people react to you?

* This question was asked whenever subject had passed through any crisis.

SEMINARY

How did you decide on this Seminary?

How are you liking the Seminary?

Have you ever regretted your choice of the ministry?

What are your doubts, if any, about the ministry?

What are your present conceptions of God, Christ, and Prayer?

N.B. Many of these questions were answered by the men as they described other situations.

As soon as anything significant appeared, as, for example, "I didn't have much to do with the boys in high school", such a statement was regarded as a "clue" to other significant data and was followed up.

APPENDIX B

STATISTICAL DATA

The percentages contained in this chapter are not meant to be taken as a basis for generalizations, since they are derived from only fifty studies. The interviews were obtained for the primary purpose of discovering factors of motivation and therefore no attempt was made to collect a large enough quantity of materials essential for reliable statistical treatment.

However, there are certain questions which come almost immediately to the mind of the inquirer--questions concerning the age at which men decide on the ministry, the status of religion in the home of the ministerial student during his childhood, and other queries of this type. The percentages given below are an attempt to make a statistical reply to such inquiries.

Degree of religious expression in the home.

The ratings indicating the degree of religious expression are based on an estimate of the following factors: The profession of a religious faith by the father and mother and the church activity of both, the church activity of the children, the degree to which family worship, grace at meals, children's prayers at bed-time and the reading of the Bible

or missionary stories, were observed in the home.

26% came from homes of intense degree of religious expression

22% " " " "very strong " " " "

24% " " " " strong " " " "

10% " " " "fairly strong " " " "

10% " " " " moderate " " " "

8% " " " " mild " " " "

Theologically, the homes range from extreme conservatism to the moderate position, with most cases falling in the conservative group. Perhaps one case may be said to belong in the liberal category.

Religious forms (ritual) are observed in the home.

Grace at meals 70% of the cases.

Family worship 38% " " "

Prayers at night 100% " " "

Reading of Bible or missionary stories in 48% " " "

Age of church membership.

24% joined the church under 12 years of age.

34% became members at 12 years of age

36% became church members between the ages of 13 and 17,
most of them in the early part of this period.

6% joined the church at 18 years of age or over.

The average age of joining the church was 12.7 years.

Age of decision for the ministry.

14% of the students decided on the ministry very early in
childhood (about 5 years of age).

The average age of decision was 18.8 years.

There seems to be no particular correlation between the degree of religious expression in the home and the age either of joining the church or of deciding on the ministry. This would indicate the presence of other factors which can be ascertained only through analysis of the cases.

Occupation of the father.

It is interesting to note that 18% of the students are sons of ministers. The predominant occupation among fathers is business. Eighteen per cent of the students have fathers who are, or were at one time, engaged in farming.

Size of the community.

22%			come from rural communities (farms or villages)
46%	"	"	small towns (under 10,000 in size)
24%	"	"	large towns (10,000 to 50,000 in size)
20%	"	"	cities (50,000 or above).

Where an individual has lived during childhood in two types of communities, both are included in this estimate.

Participation in church and other religious organizations.

It is significant that practically all of the students, with very few exceptions, show a marked degree of religious participation from early childhood. Another significant fact is that in most cases the participation not only continues from early to later years without serious interruptions, but also shows a definite increase in the years after the age of 18, particularly at colleges, where there are many opportunities for religious activity.

